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Development of good-neighbourly relations among Balkan States

Maintenance of international security

Letter dated 20 July 2000 from the Permanent Representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to bring to your attention the joint statement of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of countries participating in the South-East European Cooperation Process, issued at the annual ministerial meeting, held in Ohrid, the Republic of Macedonia, on 14 July 2000.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, under items 67 and 68 of the provisional agenda.

(*Signed*) Naste **Calovski**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 20 July 2000 from the Permanent Representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Joint statement of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of countries participating in the South-East European Cooperation Process issued at Ohrid, 14 July 2000

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of South-East European countries, Ismail Cern, Aleksandar Dimitrov, Nadezhda Mihaylova, Paskal Milo and George Papandreou, as well as Eugen Dijmarescu, State Secretary for European Affairs, met in Ohrid, on 14 July 2000, at the annual ministerial meeting of the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP).

Tonino Picula, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Mladen Bosic, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, also attended the meeting as representatives of observer countries to the SEECP.

Representatives of the Office of the Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact, Austria (the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Chairman-in-Office), the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary (the Central European Initiative Chair), the Republic of Moldova, Poland, the Russian Federation, Slovenia, Spain, Ukraine, the United States of America, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, the Central European Initiative Executive Secretariat, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the South-East European Cooperative Initiative, the Economic Commission for Europe and the World Bank also attended the meeting as invitees.

The Ministers noted with satisfaction the high level of good relations among their countries, based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, shared Euro-Atlantic values and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) principles for relations among States, respecting sovereignty, the inviolability of borders, human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights of persons belonging to national minorities. They reaffirmed their commitment to further develop their cooperation in the spirit of good-neighbourliness, openness and cooperativeness in order to attain their countries' common goal to transform South-Eastern Europe into a region of security, stability and economic prosperity.

The Ministers exchanged views on the developments affecting stability, security and democracy in South-Eastern Europe and the role of the SEECP, taking note with satisfaction that the focus of the international community on concerted efforts to foster peace, democracy, stability, security, respect for human rights and economic prosperity in the South-East European region corresponds fully to the SEECP strategic objectives.

The Ministers expressed their conviction that the South-East European Cooperation Process has been developing into a major cooperation initiative of the countries in the region with great potential to promote good-neighbourly relations, cooperation, peace and stability in South-Eastern Europe. They reiterated that the adoption of the Charter on Good-Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in South-Eastern Europe represents a genuine code of conduct for the

relations among their countries and a major contribution to the strengthening of cooperation and stability in the region.

Reaffirming their conviction that the future of the region lies in its integration in the European and Euro-Atlantic political and security structures, the Ministers expressed their firm commitment for the inclusion of the SEECP participating countries in these structures.

The Ministers noted with satisfaction the progress in the European Union enlargement process resulting from the Luxembourg and Helsinki European Council Summit decisions. In the same context, they welcomed the Santa Maria de Feira European Council conclusions, which stressed that the countries included in the process of stabilization and association are recognized as potential candidates for European Union membership, and the European Union's commitment to the fullest possible integration of the countries concerned in the political and economic mainstream of Europe.

The Ministers welcomed the progress made by the countries included in the stabilization and association process with respect to the negotiations on the stabilization and association agreements with the European Union.

The Ministers took note with interest of the proposal to convene a summit meeting between the European Union and the concerned countries in the region, to be held in autumn in Croatia, where the European Union member States should confirm the commitment to supporting the process of democratic and economic reforms for the purpose of these countries' accelerated rapprochement with the European Union.

Firmly convinced that the NATO integration of the appellant countries participating in the South-East European Cooperation Process would contribute to the strengthening of the security and stability of the Euro-Atlantic area, the Ministers welcomed the results of the recently held Vilnius Conference, where the nine countries aspiring to NATO membership issued a joint statement in which they asked NATO member countries to invite them to the 2002 NATO Summit to join the alliance, emphasizing in this regard the importance of successful completion of the membership action plan.

In this context, as an expression of the readiness of their respective Governments to undertake their share of the responsibilities for building defence cooperation, developing confidence and security-building initiatives and strengthening security, stability and transparency in the region of South-Eastern Europe, the Ministers especially underscored the role and contribution of the Multinational Peace Force/South-East Europe as part of the South-East European Defence Ministerial Process. They also reconfirmed their determination to further contribute to the successful implementation of the NATO South-Eastern Europe initiative.

Underlining the importance of preventing the illegal transfer and possession of small arms and light weapons for the stability and security in the region of South-Eastern Europe, the Ministers expressed their determination for further practical cooperation in these fields.

The Ministers reviewed the situation in the region, including the developments in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. They expressed their deep concern over the

recent revision of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia Constitution with the clear objective of prolonging the mandate in office of the current President, entailing serious consequences for the country and for stability and security in the region. They expressed their support for democratic forces, independent media and civil society in their struggle for democratization of the country. They stated that they looked forward to the time when the future democratic Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, cooperating with its neighbours, would be able to be fully integrated into the international community and its structures.

The Ministers also reviewed the situation in Kosovo, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and expressed their high appreciation for the efforts undertaken by the international community for the stabilization and reconstruction of the province, where the rights of all citizens and ethnic and religious communities will be fully and equally respected. In this context, they confirmed their full support to the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and the Kosovo Force to bring peace and democracy to Kosovo. The Ministers reiterated their commitment to contribute to building in Kosovo a democratic, multi-ethnic and multicultural society based on substantial autonomy, taking into account the Rambouillet accords as well as the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, pending a final settlement in accordance with Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). They reiterated also their support for this resolution, which is expected to be fully implemented and strictly adhered to by all concerned. Taking into consideration the efforts of the international community for establishing lasting peace and democratic development, the Ministers stressed the need for elimination of the concept of ethnically clean territories, and expressed their firm commitment to create the conditions necessary for the return of all refugees, regardless of their ethnic origin, as the basis for building an open civil society.

While taking note of the improvement of the security climate in Kosovo, they condemned any attempts to renew ethnically, politically or criminally motivated violence as acts undermining the efforts undertaken by the international community and all democratic political forces in Kosovo aimed at enhancing the process of restoring peace and stability, respecting the inviolability of borders, starting economic development and building administrative structures in the province.

They considered that the participation of the representatives of all ethnic and religious communities in the joint interim administrative structures is of utmost importance. The Ministers urged all local leaders to live up to their responsibilities for the success of the political process. In this context, they welcomed the decision of the representatives of the Serb Community to continue participating in the joint interim administrative structures.

Underlining the importance of creating the necessary conditions later this year for conducting free and fair local elections in Kosovo, which will provide democratic representation of all citizens of Kosovo in the local administrative structures, the Ministers expressed their full support for the efforts of OSCE and Council of Europe to that end.

The Ministers expressed their support for the democratic and reform-oriented policy of the leadership of Montenegro, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and further expressed their concern over the continuous pressure coming from the current Yugoslav regime.

The Ministers commended the progress achieved by Croatia in the democratic and economic reforms and welcomed the inclusion of Croatia in the NATO Partnership for Peace programme.

The Ministers supported the accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Council of Europe, which would represent an important contribution to the establishment of lasting peace and stability in South-eastern Europe. They considered this step as concrete support to all democratic forces in that country striving to fully implement the Dayton Agreement and to achieve the aim of establishing a democratic society based on principles of respect of human rights and the rule of law. The Ministers urged citizens and the leadership of Bosnia and Herzegovina to take ownership of their future and they reaffirmed their support for the High Representative to increase the effectiveness of the common institutions foreseen in the Peace Agreement, in particular the Council of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly, as requested by the Peace Implementation Council.

The Ministers underlined the need for accelerated and full implementation of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, which would facilitate economic growth as a prerequisite for political stability and wider democratization in South-Eastern Europe. They also stressed the need for a greater degree of transparency in the process, for strengthening the role of co-chairs and for closer cooperation between the SEECP and the Office of the Special Coordinator.

The Ministers welcomed the progress in the realization of the initiatives and projects within the Stability Pact, especially the Investment Compact and the Anti-Corruption Initiative. Furthermore, they expressed their expectation for greater participation of their countries in the implementation of the Stability Pact through their assumption of the role of true owners of the process, in accordance with the Sarajevo Declaration.

The Ministers welcomed the results of the Brussels regional funding conference as well as the initial results of the financing and implementation of selected projects. In this context, they underlined the need for prompt realization of the quick-start project package in order to achieve the first concrete results in the implementation of the Stability Pact. Welcoming the readiness of the donor countries to make decisive steps towards the implementation of priority projects of regional interest, they underlined the necessity of visible short-term results, with the expectation that the declared support would materialize through concrete financial assistance and the elimination of all obstacles on the way to project implementation.

The Ministers pointed to the need for increasing, to the extent possible, the share of grants in the assistance package.

The Ministers welcomed the results of the informal ministerial meeting of the South-East European countries and the meeting of the Regional Table for South-Eastern Europe, held in Thessaloniki, Greece, where the Agenda for Stability — a document determining the framework for future intensive cooperation — was adopted. They expressed their full support for the efforts of the Stability Pact Special Coordinator to overcome difficulties in the realization of this extremely important process.

The Ministers commended the substantial efforts of the Committee of Political Directors for the more active inclusion of the SEECP in the Stability Pact, particularly in harmonizing and coordinating the positions of the SEECP

participating countries towards the implementation of the Stability Pact. The result of the recent effort was the Elements for Joint Position on the Stability Pact of the SEECP Countries, presented by the SEECP Chairman-in-Office at the meeting of the Stability Pact Regional Table in Thessaloniki.

Taking into account the direct and indirect losses of the countries of the region suffered as a result of the conflict in Kosovo and sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Ministers expressed their appreciation for the positive response for continuing assistance to the two countries most affected by the crisis.

The Ministers also stressed the necessity to accelerate efforts for restoring free navigation on the Danube. In this context, they welcomed European Union assistance to the Danube Commission and called for an early reopening of this major European waterway.

Stressing the importance of the SEECP as a forum for political dialogue and cooperation among the countries in the region, they entrusted the political directors with the task of making full use of the possibilities provided by the Charter on Good-Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in South-Eastern Europe in order to conduct political consultations, to examine the ways and means for developing cooperation in the established areas of common interest and to assess the possibility for further institutional development of the Process in parallel with the development of cooperation activities and reporting as the concrete results on these points are obtained.

As part of their exchange of opinions on matters of common interest, the Ministers emphasized the importance of closer involvement of the relevant institutions and agencies of their Governments as well as of non-governmental institutions, through international and regional organizations, in the following fields:

- Supporting contacts and dialogue among the elected representatives of peoples by strengthening the parliamentary dimension and especially the cooperation among the Speakers of Parliaments and Chairpersons of parliamentary committees for foreign affairs;
- Cooperation in order to promote trade and investments between their countries, including in the financial and banking areas;
- Cooperation in combating organized crime, trafficking of illicit drugs, arms and human beings and terrorism;
- Closer and intensive practical cooperation, as necessary, combining national means in order to fight natural disasters and to alleviate their consequences;
- Intensifying cooperation in the areas of justice and home affairs;
- Developing further cooperation and exchange in the fields of culture, youth, sports and environmental protection;
- Promoting cooperation and increased dialogue between non-governmental organizations active in various fields.

The Ministers commended the work of the Committee of Political Directors in the preparation of the high-level meetings, as well as in the institutional development of the process with a positive contribution towards fostering regional cooperation within the SEECP.

The Ministers approved the report submitted to them by the Committee of Political Directors.

The Ministers reiterated the status of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as a SEECP participating country, considering the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's chair as temporarily vacant, to be resumed as soon as conditions allow it.

The Ministers expressed their appreciation for the hospitality of Aleksandar Dimitrov for hosting the meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of countries participating in the South-East European Cooperation Process.

In view of the fact that as from 1 March 2001 the next SEECP Chairman-in-Office shall be Paskal Milo, Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Ministers agreed that their next annual meeting would take place in Tirana in June 2001.